GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:466
ANSWERED ON:28.04.2005
CASUALTIES OF ARMY PERSONNEL DURING OPERATION PARAKRAM
Jha Shri Raghunath

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 60 Army personnel died and 142 wounded while laying outdated and defective mines with unworkable fuses during `Operation Parakram` from December 19,2001 to October 16, 2002;

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to inquire into the mine accidents and to fix the responsibility for the use of outdated mines and disregard of laid down safety procedures;

(c) if so, the details in this regard; and

(d) the details of measures taken to replace old and defective mines and fuses with modem, State-of-the-art mines and latest excavation equipments for demining?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED OUESTION NO. 466 FOR 28.4.2005

A total of 60 Army personnel lost their lives while 142 were wounded while laying mines during `Operation Parakram`.

Mine laying is a hazardous operation and the majority of mine related accidents occurred despite all safety measures and prescribed procedures being observed due to adverse environmental, terrain and battle related factors such as need for mines being laid during hours of darkness to prevent detection by the enemy, severe fog and winter conditions and thick undergrowth in some areas. Most of these factors were beyond the control of the field formations. Only those stocks of mines and fuses which were validated as serviceable on the basis of prescribed procedure were used. Under these circumstances holding of an enquiry and fixing responsibility was not considered.

However as an added precautionary step, stock of mines upto 1975 vintage have been declared unserviceable and are being disposed off. Further, procurement of a new family of `state of the art` mines and modem mine laying, recording and recovery system is being conceptualised as a part of the continuous process of modernization. Soldiers involved in demining operations after `Operation Parakram` were provided with protective gear like helmets with visors, bullet proof jackets and anti mine boots. Mechanical mine recovery equipment was also procured and deployed after `Operation Parakram` to ensure safety in demining operations.